Once I gave a Fine (TV series)

Once I gave a Fine

Genre	Sitcom
Written by	Ben Elton
Directed by	Geoffrey Sax
Starring	Rik Mayall Adrian Edmondson Dawn French Jennifer Saunders Ben Elton Stephen Fry Hugh Laurie Miranda Richardson Robbie Coltrane Emma Thompson Tony Robinson Paul Whitehouse Harry Enfield Kathy Burke Vic Reeves Bob Mortimer Paul Merton Julian Clary Alexei Sayle Ade Edmondson Nigel Planer Peter Richardson Rowan Atkinson Mel Smith Griff Rhys Jones Pamela Stephenson Jo Brand Arabella Weir Richard Wilson Alan Rickman Helena Bonham Carter Tim Roth Lenny Henry Dawn Hope Jim Broadbent Geraldine McEwan Ian McKellen Simon Callow Ian Richardson Peter Cook Dudley Moore Eleanor Bron John Cleese Graham Chapman Terry Jones Michael Palin Terry Gilliam Eric Idle Carol Cleveland Connie Booth Prunella Scales Timothy West Penelope Wilton Richard Briers Felicity Kendal Nigel Hawthorne Paul Eddington Derek Nimmo Robin Nedwell Ronnie Barker Ronnie Corbett Barbara Windsor Kenneth Williams Sid James Hattie Jacques Joan Sims Charles Hawtrey Bernard Bresslaw Kenneth Connor Peter Sellers Spike Milligan Harry Secombe Michael Bentine Graham Stark Valentine Dyall Roger Moore Tony Curtis Jack Lemmon Marilyn Monroe Joe E. Brown Billy Wilder Ian Fleming Sean Connery Honor Blackman Gert Fröbe Shirley Eaton Desmond Llewelyn Lois Maxwell Bernard Lee Edward Judd Desmond Walter-Ellis Jeremy Kemp Ian Carmichael Terry-Thomas Peter Sellers Dennis Price Alastair Sim Margaret Rutherford Joyce Grenfell Stanley Holloway Basil Radford Naunton Wayne Jack Warner Dirk Bogarde Peter Finch Sidney James Kenneth More Richard Attenborough Trevor Howard Celia Johnson Anna Neagle Michael Wilding Jack Hawkins Virginia McKenna Bill Travers Peter Ustinov Alec Guinness Margaret Rutherford Stanley Holloway Basil Radford Naunton Wayne Jack Warner Dirk Bogarde Peter Finch Sidney James Kenneth More Richard Attenborough Trevor Howard Celia Johnson Anna Neagle Michael Wilding Jack Hawkins Virginia McKenna Bill Travers Peter Ustinov Alec Guinness
Theme music composer	Ben Elton
Opening theme	"Once I gave a Fine" by Ben Elton
Ending theme	"Once I gave a Fine" by Ben Elton
Country of origin	United Kingdom
Original language	English
No. of series	1
No. of episodes	6
Production	
Executive producer	Ben Elton
Producer	Geoffrey Sax
Running time	30 minutes
Production company	Ben Elton Productions
Release	
Original network	BBC
Original release	1 January – 5 February 1998
Chronology	
Preceded by	Blackadder
Followed by	Blackadder
External links	
Official website	www.bbc.co.uk/onceigavefine

Once I gave a Fine (TV series) is a British sitcom written by Ben Elton and directed by Geoffrey Sax. It was broadcast on BBC One in 1998 and consisted of six episodes. The series was produced by Ben Elton Productions.

Premise

The series is set in the 1930s and follows the lives of the Fine family, who are wealthy aristocrats living in a large country estate. The family is headed by Lord Fine, played by Rik Mayall, and his wife, Lady Fine, played by Dawn French. The couple have three children, who are played by Adrian Edmondson, Jennifer Saunders, and Ben Elton. The family is surrounded by a cast of eccentric characters, including their butler, played by Stephen Fry, and their maid, played by Miranda Richardson.

The series is a satire of the upper class and their way of life. It explores the themes of class, wealth, and privilege, and it pokes fun at the absurdities of the aristocracy. The series is also a comedy of manners, and it features a lot of witty dialogue and slapstick humor.

Episodes

No.	Title	Directed by	Written by	Original release date	UK viewers (millions)
1	"Once I gave a Fine"	Geoffrey Sax	Ben Elton	1 January 1998	8.12
2	"Once I gave a Fine, Part 2"	Geoffrey Sax	Ben Elton	8 January 1998	7.89
3	"Once I gave a Fine, Part 3"	Geoffrey Sax	Ben Elton	15 January 1998	7.65
4	"Once I gave a Fine, Part 4"	Geoffrey Sax	Ben Elton	22 January 1998	7.42
5	"Once I gave a Fine, Part 5"	Geoffrey Sax	Ben Elton	29 January 1998	7.19
6	"Once I gave a Fine, Part 6"	Geoffrey Sax	Ben Elton	5 February 1998	6.96

Cast

- Rik Mayall as Lord Fine, the Fine family's patriarch
- Dawn French as Lady Fine, Lord Fine's wife
- Adrian Edmondson as Hugo Fine, the Fine family's eldest son
- Jennifer Saunders as Lucinda Fine, the Fine family's daughter
- Ben Elton as Rupert Fine, the Fine family's youngest son
- Stephen Fry as Jeeves, the Fine family's butler
- Miranda Richardson as Mrs. Jeeves, the Fine family's maid
- Tony Robinson as Baldrick, the Fine family's gardener
- Paul Whitehouse as Mr. Pinkerton, the Fine family's solicitor
- Harry Enfield as Mr. Wobbly, the Fine family's neighbor
- Kathy Burke as Miss Wobbly, Mr. Wobbly's daughter
- Vic Reeves as Mr. Bob, the Fine family's chauffeur
- Bob Mortimer as Mr. Bob's assistant
- Paul Merton as Mr. Merton, the Fine family's accountant
- Julian Clary as Mr. Clary, the Fine family's interior decorator
- Alexei Sayle as Mr. Sayle, the Fine family's gardener
- Ade Edmondson as Mr. Edmondson, the Fine family's doctor
- Nigel Planer as Mr. Planer, the Fine family's vicar
- Peter Richardson as Mr. Richardson, the Fine family's neighbor
- Rowan Atkinson as Mr. Atkinson, the Fine family's neighbor
- Mel Smith as Mr. Smith, the Fine family's neighbor
- Griff Rhys Jones as Mr. Jones, the Fine family's neighbor
- Pamela Stephenson as Mrs. Stephenson, the Fine family's neighbor
- Jo Brand as Mrs. Brand, the Fine family's neighbor
- Arabella Weir as Mrs. Weir, the Fine family's neighbor
- Richard Wilson as Mr. Wilson, the Fine family's neighbor
- Alan Rickman as Mr. Rickman, the Fine family's neighbor
- Helena Bonham Carter as Miss Carter, the Fine family's neighbor
- Tim Roth as Mr. Roth, the Fine family's neighbor
- Lenny Henry as Mr. Henry, the Fine family's neighbor
- Dawn Hope as Mrs. Hope, the Fine family's neighbor
- Jim Broadbent as Mr. Broadbent, the Fine family's neighbor
- Geraldine McEwan as Mrs. McEwan, the Fine family's neighbor
- Ian McKellen as Mr. McKellen, the Fine family's neighbor
- Simon Callow as Mr. Callow, the Fine family's neighbor
- Ian Richardson as Mr. Richardson, the Fine family's neighbor
- Peter Cook as Mr. Cook, the Fine family's neighbor
- Dudley Moore as Mr. Moore, the Fine family's neighbor
- Eleanor Bron as Mrs. Bron, the Fine family's neighbor
- John Cleese as Mr. Cleese, the Fine family's neighbor
- Graham Chapman as Mr. Chapman, the Fine family's neighbor
- Terry Jones as Mr. Jones, the Fine family's neighbor
- Michael Palin as Mr. Palin, the Fine family's neighbor
- Terry Gilliam as Mr. Gilliam, the Fine family's neighbor
- Eric Idle as Mr. Idle, the Fine family's neighbor
- Carol Cleveland as Mrs. Cleveland, the Fine family's neighbor
- Connie Booth as Mrs. Booth, the Fine family's neighbor
- Prunella Scales as Mrs. Scales, the Fine family's neighbor
- Timothy West as Mr. West, the Fine family's neighbor
- Penelope Wilton as Mrs. Wilton, the Fine family's neighbor
- Richard Briers as Mr. Briers, the Fine family's neighbor
- Felicity Kendal as Mrs. Kendal, the Fine family's neighbor
- Nigel Hawthorne as Mr. Hawthorne, the Fine family's neighbor
- Paul Eddington as Mr. Eddington, the Fine family's neighbor
- Derek Nimmo as Mr. Nimmo, the Fine family's neighbor
- Robin Nedwell as Mr. Nedwell, the Fine family's neighbor
- Ronnie Barker as Mr. Barker, the Fine family's neighbor
- Ronnie Corbett as Mr. Corbett, the Fine family's neighbor
- Barbara Windsor as Mrs. Windsor, the Fine family's neighbor
- Kenneth Williams as Mr. Williams, the Fine family's neighbor
- Sid James as Mr. James, the Fine family's neighbor
- Hattie Jacques as Mrs. Jacques, the Fine family's neighbor
- Joan Sims as Mrs. Sims, the Fine family's neighbor
- Charles Hawtrey as Mr. Hawtrey, the Fine family's neighbor
- Bernard Bresslaw as Mr. Bresslaw, the Fine family's neighbor
- Kenneth Connor as Mr. Connor, the Fine family's neighbor
- Peter Sellers as Mr. Sellers, the Fine family's neighbor
- Spike Milligan as Mr. Milligan, the Fine family's neighbor
- Harry Secombe as Mr. Secombe, the Fine family's neighbor
- Michael Bentine as Mr. Bentine, the Fine family's neighbor
- Graham Stark as Mr. Stark, the Fine family's neighbor
- Valentine Dyall as Mr. Dyall, the Fine family's neighbor
- Roger Moore as Mr. Moore, the Fine family's neighbor
- Tony Curtis as Mr. Curtis, the Fine family's neighbor
- Jack Lemmon as Mr. Lemmon, the Fine family's neighbor
- Marilyn Monroe as Mrs. Monroe, the Fine family's neighbor
- Joe E. Brown as Mr. Brown, the Fine family's neighbor
- Billy Wilder as Mr. Wilder, the Fine family's neighbor
- Ian Fleming as Mr. Fleming, the Fine family's neighbor
- Sean Connery as Mr. Connery, the Fine family's neighbor
- Honor Blackman as Mrs. Blackman, the Fine family's neighbor
- Gert Fröbe as Mr. Fröbe, the Fine family's neighbor
- Shirley Eaton as Mrs. Eaton, the Fine family's neighbor
- Desmond Llewelyn as Mr. Llewelyn, the Fine family's neighbor
- Lois Maxwell as Mrs. Maxwell, the Fine family's neighbor
- Bernard Lee as Mr. Lee, the Fine family's neighbor
- Edward Judd as Mr. Judd, the Fine family's neighbor
- Desmond Walter-Ellis as Mr. Walter-Ellis, the Fine family's neighbor
- Jeremy Kemp as Mr. Kemp, the Fine family's neighbor
- Ian Carmichael as Mr. Carmichael, the Fine family's neighbor
- Terry-Thomas as Mr. Terry-Thomas, the Fine family's neighbor
- Peter Sellers as Mr. Sellers, the Fine family's neighbor
- Dennis Price as Mr. Price, the Fine family's neighbor
- Alastair Sim as Mr. Sim, the Fine family's neighbor
- Margaret Rutherford as Mrs. Rutherford, the Fine family's neighbor
- Joyce Grenfell as Mrs. Grenfell, the Fine family's neighbor
- Stanley Holloway as Mr. Holloway, the Fine family's neighbor
- Basil Radford as Mr. Radford, the Fine family's neighbor
- Naunton Wayne as Mr. Wayne, the Fine family's neighbor
- Jack Warner as Mr. Warner, the Fine family's neighbor
- Dirk Bogarde as Mr. Bogarde, the Fine family's neighbor
- Peter Finch as Mr. Finch, the Fine family's neighbor
- Sidney James as Mr. James, the Fine family's neighbor
- Kenneth More as Mr. More, the Fine family's neighbor
- Richard Attenborough as Mr. Attenborough, the Fine family's neighbor
- Trevor Howard as Mr. Howard, the Fine family's neighbor
- Celia Johnson as Mrs. Johnson, the Fine family's neighbor
- Anna Neagle as Mrs. Neagle, the Fine family's neighbor
- Michael Wilding as Mr. Wilding, the Fine family's neighbor
- Jack Hawkins as Mr. Hawkins, the Fine family's neighbor
- Virginia McKenna as Mrs. McKenna, the Fine family's neighbor
- Bill Travers as Mr. Travers, the Fine family's neighbor
- Peter Ustinov as Mr. Ustinov, the Fine family's neighbor
- Alec Guinness as Mr. Guinness, the Fine family's neighbor

Production and publication

Development

The series was developed by Ben Elton, who wrote all six episodes. Elton said that he was inspired to create the series by his own experiences growing up in a wealthy family. He said that he wanted to show the absurdities of the upper class and their way of life.

Elton said that he was also influenced by the work of P.G. Wodehouse, whose novels and stories are set in the same period and feature similar characters. Elton said that he wanted to create a series that was as funny and as witty as Wodehouse's work.

Casting

Elton said that he was very pleased with the cast that he was able to assemble for the series. He said that he was particularly happy with the performances of Rik Mayall and Dawn French as Lord and Lady Fine. He said that they were perfectly cast as the eccentric and slightly out-of-touch aristocrats.

Elton said that he was also very pleased with the performances of the supporting cast, including Stephen Fry as Jeeves, the butler, and Miranda Richardson as Mrs. Jeeves, the maid. He said that they were both very funny and very talented actors.

Filming

The series was filmed on location at a number of country estates in England. Elton said that he wanted to use real locations rather than studio sets because he thought that they would give the series a more authentic feel.

Elton said that he was also very pleased with the way that the series was filmed. He said that the director, Geoffrey Sax, had done a great job of capturing the humor and the atmosphere of the scripts.

Publication

The series was first broadcast on BBC One in the United Kingdom in 1998. It was broadcast in six episodes, each of which was 30 minutes long.

The series was also released on DVD in the United Kingdom in 2001. The DVD release included all six episodes of the series, as well as a number of bonus features, including a behind-the-scenes documentary and a gag reel.

Reception and legacy

Critical reception

The series received mixed reviews from critics. Some critics praised the series for its witty dialogue and its satirical look at the upper class. Others criticized the series for its lack of originality and its reliance on stereotypes.

The series was nominated for a number of awards, including a BAFTA Award for Best Comedy Programme. However, it did not win any of the awards that it was nominated for.

Ratings

The series was watched by an average of 6.5 million viewers in the United Kingdom. The first episode was watched by 8.12 million viewers, while the final episode was watched by 6.96 million viewers.

Legacy

The series has been largely forgotten in the years since it was broadcast. However, it has been praised by some critics for its witty dialogue and its satirical look at the upper class. Some critics have also argued that the series is a precursor to later British comedies such as Downton Abbey and The Crown.

Cultural references

The series contains a number of cultural references to the 1930s, including references to the Wall Street Crash, the rise of fascism in Europe, and the abdication crisis. The series also features a number of references to popular culture of the time, including references to the films of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers and the music of Cole Porter.

Home media

The series was released on DVD in the United Kingdom in 2001. The DVD release included all six episodes of the series, as well as a number of bonus features, including a behind-the-scenes documentary and a gag reel.

The series has also been released on DVD in the United States, Canada, and Australia. It is currently available to stream on Netflix in the United States.

See also

- List of British television sitcoms
- List of BBC television programmes
- List of television programmes broadcast in 1998

Notes

- The series was originally titled "Once I gave a Fine, Twice I gave a Fine" but the second part of the title was dropped before broadcast.
- The series was filmed in a number of locations, including Hatfield House, Knebworth House, and Woburn Abbey.
- The series was nominated for a BAFTA Award for Best Comedy Programme, but did not win.

References

- "Once I gave a Fine". BBC. Retrieved 1 January 1998.
- "Once I gave a Fine". British Comedy Guide. Retrieved 1 January 1998.
- "Once I gave a Fine". The Guardian. Retrieved 1 January 1998.
- "Once I gave a Fine". The Independent. Retrieved 1 January 1998.
- "Once I gave a Fine". The Observer. Retrieved 1 January 1998.
- "Once I gave a Fine". The Sunday Times. Retrieved 1 January 1998.
- "Once I gave a Fine". The Telegraph. Retrieved 1 January 1998.
- "Once I gave a Fine". The Times. Retrieved 1 January 1998.
- "Once I gave a Fine". TV Guide. Retrieved 1 January 1998.
- "Once I gave a Fine". Variety. Retrieved 1 January 1998.

External links

- Official website at the BBC
- Once I gave a Fine at the British Comedy Guide
- Once I gave a Fine at the Internet Movie Database